

## Lawing and Jawing

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LAWING AND JAWING by ZORA Neale HURSTON 43 W. 66th St. New York City

TIME: Present

PLACE : Way cross Georgia

SCENE: Judge Dunfummy's Court.

PERSONS: Judge Dunfummy, Officer Simpson and another, Jemima Flapcakes, Cliff Mullins, John Barnes, two lawyers, a clerk, a pretty girl and her escort.

SETTING: Usual court-room arrangement, except that there is a large red arrow pointing off-stage left, marked "To Jail."

ACTION: At rise everybody is in place except the Judge. Suddenly the CLERK looks off-stage right and motions for everybody to rise. Enter the JUDGE. He wears a black cap and gown and has his gavel in his hand. The two POLICEMEN walk behind him holding up his gown. He mounts the bench and glares all about him before he seats himself. There is a PRETTY GIRL in the front row left, and he takes a good look at her, smiles, frowns at her escort. He motions the police to leave him and take their places with the spectators and he then raps vigorously with his gavel for order.

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JUDGE Hear! Hear! Court is set! My honor is on de bench. You moufy folks set up! (He glares at the boy with the pretty girl) All right, Mr. Whistle-britches, just keep up dat jawing now and see how much time I'll give you!

BOY I wasn't talking, your honor.

JUDGE Well, quit looking so moufy. (to CLERK) Call de first case. And I warn each and all dat my honor is in bad humor dis mawnin'. I'd give a canary bird twenty years for peckin' at a elephant. (to CLERK) Bring 'em on.

2. CLERK (Reading) Cliff Mullins, charged with assault upon his wife with a weapon and disturbing the peace. (As CLIFF is led to the - bar by the officer, the JUDGE glares ferociously at the prisoner. His wife, all bandages, limps up to the bar at the same time. )  
JUDGE So youse one of dese hard-boiled wife-beaters, huh? Just a mean old woman-Jessie! If I don't lay a hearing on you, God's a gopher ! Now what made you cut such a caper?

CLIFF Judge, I didn't go to hunt her. Saturday night I was down on Dearborn Street in a nasty -ditch- buffet flat

JUDGE A nasty----ditch ? Buffet flat?

CLIFF Aw, at Emma Hayles' house.

JUDGE Oh, yes. Go on.

CLIFF Well, (Points thumb at wife) she come down dere and claim I took her money and she claimed I wuz spending it on Emma.

CLIFF'S WIFE Aind dat's just whut he was doing, too, Judge.

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CLIFF AW, she's tellin' a great big ole Georgia lie, Judge. I wasn't spendin' no money of her'n.

WOMAN Yes he was, Judge. There wasn't no money for him to git but mine. He ain't hit a lick of work since God been to Macon. Know whut he 'lowed when I worry him 'bout workin'? Says he wouldn't take a job wid de Careless Love Lumber Company, puttin' out whut make you do me lak you do, do, do.

JUDGE So, you goes for a sweet-back, do you?

CLi Naw suh, Judge. I'd be glad to work if I could find a job.

JUDGE How long you been outa work?

CLIFF Seventeen years -

3. JUDGE Seventeen years? (to woman) You been takin' keer of dis man for seventeen years? WOMAN Naw, but he been so mean to me, it seems lak seventeen years.

JUDGE Now you tell me just where he hurt you.

WOMAN Judge, tell you de truth, I'm hurt all over. XRubs her buttocks) Fact is I'm cut,

JUDGE Did you git cut in de fracas?

WOMAN (Feeling the back of her left thigh below her buttocks) Not in de fracas, Judge - just below it. (She starts to show the JUDGE where she has been cut. He motions to stop her.) JUDGE Stop ! (to Officer Simpson) Grab him. Put him in de shade. CLIFF Judge, I'm unguilty ! I ain't laid de weight of my hand on her in malice. You got me 'cused of murder and I ain't harmed a child. JUDGE Lemme ast you something. Didn't you know dat all de women in dis town belongs to me? Beat my women and I'll stuff you in jail. 90 years. Take 'im away.

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(CLIFF is led off to jail. JUDGE looks angrily at the boy who is holding hands with the pretty girl). You runs me hot and I'm just dyin' to sit gn Eo ' case. `.'hut you in lere for? BOY Nothin'.

JUDGE Well, whut you dote' in my court, you gater-faced rascal?

4.

BOY My girl wanted to see whut was goin' on, so I brought her in.

JUDGE Oh yeah! (Smiles at GIRL) She was usin' good sense to come see whut I'm doin', but how come you come in here? You gointer have a hard time gittin' out.

BOY I ain't done a thing. I ain't never done nothin'. I'm just as clean as a fish, and he been in bathin' all his life.

JUDGE You ain't done nothin', hunh? Well den youse guilty of vacancy. Grab 'im, Simpson, and search 'im - and if he got any concealed weapons, I'm gointer give 'im life-time and eight years mo'. (The OFFICER seizes the boy and frisks him. All he finds is a new deck of cards. The JUDGE looks at them in triumph.) Uhh hunh! I knowed it, one of dese skin game jelly-beans. Robbin' hard workin' men out they money.

BOY Judge, I ain't used 'em at all. See, dey's brand new.

JUDGE Well, den youse charged wid totin' concealed cards and attempt to gamble. Ten years at hard labor. Put him in de dark, Simpson, and throw de key away. (He looks at the girl and beams.) Don't you worry bout how you gointer git home. You gointer be took home right, 'cause I'm gointer take you myself. Bring on de next one, Clerk.

CLERK Jemima Flap-Cakes, charged with illegal possession and sale of alcoholic liquors.

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JUDGE (She is a fat, black, belligerent looking woman. JUDGE looks coldly at her.) Well, you heard whut he said. Is you guilty or unguilty? And I'm tellin' you right now dat when you come up befo' me it's just like youse in church. You better have a strong determination, and you better tell a good experience.

5.

JEMIM A (Arms akimbo) Yes, I sold it and I'll sell it again. (snaps fingers and shakes hips) How does ole booze-selling mama talk? JUDGE Yes, five thousand dollars and ten years in jail. (Snaps fingers and shakes hips) How does ole heavy fining papa talk?

(She is led away, shouting and weeping)

CT,FRK De Otis Blunt, charged wid stealint a mule.

(LAWYER arises and comes forward with theprisoner) LAWYER You can't covict this man. I'm here to represent him.

JUDGE Yo' mouf might spout lak a coffee pot but I got a lawyer (Looks at other lawyer) dat kin beat yours segastuatin'. (Looks admiring at girl) How am I chewin' my dictionary and minglin' my alphabets?

LAWYER Well, I kin try, can't I? JUDGE Oh yeah, you kin try, but I kin see right now where he's gointer git all de time dat God ever made dat ain't been used already. From now on. (To LAWYER) Go 'head, and spread yo' lungs 0 .1 over Georgy, but he's goin' to jail.' Mules must be respected. LAWYER (Striking a pose at the bar) Your Honor, (Looks at thepretty girl) Ladies and Gentlemen -

JUDGE Never mind tbout dat lady. You talk yo' chat to me. LAWYER This is a clear case of syllogism: Again I say syllogism. My client is innocent because it was a dark night when they say he stole the mule and that's against all laws of syllogism.

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(JUDGE looks impressed and laughs)

6. JUDGE Dat ole fool do know somethin' 'bout law. LAWYER When George Washington was pleading de case of Marbury vs. Madison, what did he say? What did he say? Scintillate, scintillat, Globule oric. Fain would I fathom thy nature's specific. Loftily poised in ether capacious, strongly resembling a gem carbonacious. What did Abraham Lincoln say about mule-stealing? When torrid Phoebut refuses his presence and ceases to lamp with fierce incandescence, then you illumine the regbons supernal, scintillate, scintillate, semper nocturnal. Syllogism, again I say syllogism.

(He takes his seat amid applause)

JUDGE Man, youse a pleadin' fool. You knows yo' rules and by-laws. OTHER IP WYER Let me show my glory. Let me spread my habeas corpus.

JUDGE 'Tain't no use. Dis lawyer done convinced me. OTHER LAWYER But, lemme parade my material -

JUDGE Parade yo' material anywhere you wants to exceptin' befo' me. Dis lii girl wants to go home and I'm goin' with her and enjoy de consequences. CouUt's adjourned. C U R TA  
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